



## A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

### Quit Binging

Alcohol Poisoning Deaths — United States, 2010-2012

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[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Too many people are overindulging in alcohol and putting themselves at risk for death from alcohol poisoning.

Dr. Dafna Kanny is an epidemiologist with CDC's Alcohol Program in the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss the dangers of binge drinking, including alcohol poisoning death. Welcome to the show, Dafna.

[Dr. Kanny] Thank you for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] Dafna, let's start with what is binge drinking?

[Dr. Kanny] Binge drinking is a dangerous pattern of alcohol consumption that is defined as four or more drinks for women on an occasion, five or more drinks for men on an occasion, usually in a short period of time. Binge drinking is the most common and most deadly pattern of excessive alcohol use and most binge drinkers are not alcohol-dependent. Binge drinking has *many* risks and one of which is death from alcohol poisoning.

[Dr. Gaynes] How common are deaths from alcohol poisoning in the U.S.?

[Dr. Kanny] More than 2,200 people die from alcohol poisoning each year in the United States which translates to an average of six deaths each day.

[Dr. Gaynes] Who is most at risk for death from alcohol poisoning?

[Dr. Kanny] Three in four alcohol poisoning deaths involve adults ages 35 to 64 and most of the deaths are among men. Non-hispanic whites have the most number of deaths from alcohol poisoning, though alcohol poisoning death rates are highest among American Indians and Alaska Natives. About 70 percent of the deaths were among those who were *not* alcohol-dependent.

[Dr. Gaynes] Dafna, what are the signs of *life-threatening* alcohol poisoning?

[Dr. Kanny] When drinking a large amount of alcohol in a short period of time, it can result in very high levels of alcohol in the body which can shut down critical areas of the

brain that control breathing, heart rate, and body temperature. The life-threatening signs and symptoms of alcohol poisoning include an inability to wake up, vomiting, seizures, slow or irregular breathing, and low body temperature.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are some ways to prevent deaths from alcohol poisoning?

[Dr. Kanny] First and foremost, don't binge drink. If you choose to drink, do so in moderation—up to one drink a day for women, up to two drinks a day for men—and get help for anyone experiencing life-threatening signs of alcohol poisoning. The key to prevent alcohol poisoning death is to prevent binge drinking.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about binge drinking and alcohol poisoning?

[Dr. Kanny] You can find more information at [cdc.gov/alcohol](http://cdc.gov/alcohol).

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Dafna. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Dafna Kanny about the dangers of binge drinking and alcohol poisoning.

Remember, more than 2,200 Americans die each year from alcohol poisoning. Life-threatening signs of alcohol poisoning include vomiting, seizures, inability to wake up, slowed or irregular breathing or heart rate, and bluish skin tone. For anyone exhibiting these signs, call 911 or get the person to a health care facility immediately.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

*[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.*